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SIPDIS

BAGHDAD FOR OPA AND MANAGEMENT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [ABLD](#)

SUBJECT: REO BASRAH HOUSING

1. (SBU) Summary: REO Basra's most immediate goal is to be able to capitalize on improved security conditions by significantly increasing movements in and out of Basra Air Station (BAS). Completion of 45 ballistic housing units (BHUs) will add 90 additional rooms and will enable the REO to bring 112 additional Triple Canopy (TC) security guards and Personal Security Detachment (PSD) personnel. The additional guard force will enable REO Basra to make movements independently outside the BAS.. In the end, the REO's population will increase to 307 personnel, which will occupy all available living space. The improved security situation in Basra has sparked much interest among other USG agencies and international organizations to establish a presence at the REO. Unfortunately, these expectations should be tempered by the fact that the housing shortage will continue even after the 45 BHUs are completed. Additional housing units will have to be built before the REO can accommodate any increase in population. Now is the time to evaluate and plan for additional requirements beyond what has already been factored into the plan. End Summary

#### Background and Current Status

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2. (SBU) The BHU contract was awarded by KBR to a British firm called "Reyam" in May 2007, at a cost of \$2.5 million after a competitive bidding process. Construction began in September 2007, with an expected completion date of March 2008. Reyam, however, encountered difficulties with the management of the local labor force. In addition, the company itself also had financial problems throughout. Even 6 months after the original expected completion date, Reyam is still struggling to complete the project. As a result of all the problems, beginning around the middle of August, KBR, the prime contractor for the project, brought in additional resources of their own to help complete the work. According to the KBR Project Manager on site, he expects completion by the middle of November 2008.

#### Full House from the Moment the Ribbon is Cut

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3. (SBU) The 45 BHUs represent 90 rooms, which will bring the total number of rooms to 172. Most of the additional rooms will house the new 112 TC guards and will reduce the level of overcrowding under the overhead cover - currently, more than 200 people literally squeeze into living spaces, sometimes 3 or 4 to a room, that were originally designed to house only 80 people. The majority of the rooms will be double occupancy and are already projected to be fully occupied. The total REO population will increase to about 307 after the expansion.

#### Need to Manage Expectations

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4. (SBU) The improved security situation in Basra has sparked much interest among other USG agencies and international organizations to establish a presence at the REO. However, REO Basra will not be able to accommodate any new personnel beyond

what has already been planned, unless new housing is built. In fact, if the REO were to be staffed to full authorized strength, we would face an immediate shortage of five rooms.

15. (SBU) Comment: We foresee growing interest in using the REO as a platform (housing, life support, logistics, movements and security), not only for State Department personnel, but also for a growing number of other USG agencies and VIP visitors. Even with the new housing, if/when it is completed, Embassy demands will probably continue to outstrip REO capacities, especially if some unlikely, yet viable, contingencies are considered. For example, the REO already houses some American PRT members and their contractors. But the PRT, being that it does not fall under the REO, was never factored into REO housing requirements. The new expansion was designed to fulfill existing REO requirements, not possible future PRT ones. If at some point in the future the UK-led PRT were to become a US PRT, new housing would be required. Any such future staffing requirements for the REO should be evaluated carefully and approved by the REO, OPA, and the Embassy Management Office. It is not too early to begin planning for such contingencies, in case they become real. End Comment

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